

Meldreth Scrapbook 1897 to 1990

Facts, Features and (occasional) Fallacies  
reported in Cambridge Newspapers

summarised by

Mike Petty

Most of these stories originally appeared in the Cambridge Daily/Evening/News or the  
Cambridgeshire Weekly News, its sister title.

They are supplemented by some articles published in the  
Cambridge Independent Press or Cambridge Chronicle

Most were featured in my 'Looking Back' column in the Cambridge News from 1996-2014

The complete 'Cambridgeshire Scrapbook' of which this is a small section is published online  
at [bit.ly/CambsCollection](http://bit.ly/CambsCollection)

I have digital and other copies of most of the stories summarised.  
I hope to publish these online one day. If you would like them in the meantime then please get  
in touch.

The original volumes are housed in the Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge Central  
Library where there are many other indexes dating back to 1770.

They also have detailed newspaper cuttings files on over 750 topics that have been compiled  
since the 1960s.

Newspapers sometimes get things wrong. I copy things out incorrectly. Do check

There are a multitude of spelling and layout errors. Please forgive or correct them

News never stops but this file was finished on 31 August 2016.

I will maintain supplements and corrections – contact me for anything you need

Please make what use of these notes that you may. Kindly remember where they came from

See my website – [www.mikepetty.org.uk](http://www.mikepetty.org.uk) for further notes.

Mike Petty, Stretham

2017

1900 12 18

At Melbourn Petty Sessions the Bench granted the transfer of the licenses of the Railway Tavern, Meldreth, from Mrs Clarke to Fred Ely; that of the Fox, Gt Eversden, from George Desborough to Joseph Charteris; and that of the Wagon and Horses, Haslingfield, from James Clarke to Henry Charles Carter.

1901 07 13

The discovery of a complete outfit of women's clothing in a hedge on a lonely road at Meldreth remains enshrouded in mystery. A motor car, driven by a man who was alone, was seen to stop near the spot where the clothes were found. The car is a four-seater with a left-hand drive – a peculiarity of those of American manufacture. A woman of about 50 and of stout build was seen to alight from a bus at Orwell and noticed wandering aimlessly from one side of the road to the other. There are several deep pits full of water not far from the spot; these are to be dragged by the police.

1904 04 08

An inquiry was held into the promotion of the Meldreth and Melbourn District Gas and Water Company Bill; it aroused a deal of opposition and at times the exchanges were of a very lively character. The present Gasworks at Melbourn were not up-to-date and with growing demand a new company had been formed who would erect new gasworks in Meldreth; there had been no objection from residents. Water supplies were obtained from the river and wells and a good supply would enhance the value of property. There would be a pumping station near Melbourn Heath Farm and a 200,000-gallon reservoir. The County Council supported the scheme but the Parish and District Councils objected

1905 04 04

Bertram Palmer, a Meldreth fruit grower, has been sentenced to seven days imprisonment for refusing to pay his education rate on conscientious grounds. He was one of eight Passive Resisters who were convicted but would not allow his goods to be seized and removed them from the reach of the police. The magistrates passed judgement but then left the court without signing the warrant. We understand it is the intention of the Cambridge Passive Resisters to entertain him to a breakfast on his release from prison

05 04 04

1905 04 08

The warrant against Mr Palmer, the Meldreth Passive Resister, was quietly executed and to avoid publicity the police conveyed their prisoner direct to Cambridge by cab. The journey was not without incident however; the bolt came out of one of the shafts and the horse ran away. Some Melbourn sympathisers managed to communicate with Cambridge Resisters and a number were waiting outside the gaol to give Mr Palmer a word of welcome when he arrived.

05 04 08b

1908 05 29

The little village of Meldreth was the scene of a disastrous fire; five cottages and two bakehouses were absolutely destroyed, and several poor inhabitants have been rendered destitute as well as homeless, for their belongings were devoured by the flames. The havoc was complete and the site, about 700 yards from Meldreth station, is now marked by heaps of

debris. Remains of carts, whole sides of pork and a load of flour are amongst the ashes. CEN  
08 05 29 p6

1909 07 02

A number of village public houses are no longer economic and should close, magistrates were told. They included the Bell at Meldreth, Melbourn's Old Elm Tree, The Royal Oak Fulbourn, The Lamb and Lord Nelson at Cottenham, British Queen Chesterton, Queen's Head Dry Drayton, Over's Hare and Hounds, Balsham Five Awls and Soham's Fox-in-Wood. But the licensee of the Green Man at Swavesey said he did not want to leave it. also the Prince of Wales, Church Street and White Horse in Coronation Street, Cambridge CWN 09 07 02

1909 07 09

Licencing – includes Meldreth Bell, Melbourn Old Elm Tree, Orwell Red Lion, Fulbourn Royal Oak, Cottenham Lamb & Lord Nelson, Chesterton British Queen, Prince of Wales, Dry Drayton Queen's head, Swavesey Green Man, Over Hare & Hounds, Balsham Five Awls, Soham Fox-in-wood, Cambridge Prince of Wales & White Horse – CWN 09 07 02

1909 12 03

Lacon's brewery should receive £143 in compensation for the closure of the Red Lion public house at Orwell, the tenant, George Everitt, £16 and the Lord of the Manor £5, councillors decided. They awarded £200 compensation for the Fox and Duck in South Street Cambridge and £325 for the White Horse in Coronation Street. Agreement was also reached on The Bell at Meldreth, The Old Elm Tree Melbourn and the British Queen and Prince of Wales in Chesterton CWN 09 12 03

1910 07 01

Licences for: Bassingbourn Beerhouse in the fen, Meldreth Green Man, Fulbourn Coach & Horses, Chesterton White Horse, Cottenham Boot, Fen Drayton Horse & Gate, Longstanton Red Cow, Milton Three Tuns, Shelford King William IV, Shudy Camps Chequers, Linton George & Dragon. Cambridge Star & Garter Petty Cury, Cardinal's Cap, Crown & Anchor, Borough Boys, Ship, Merry Boys, Prince Albert, Oxford – all refused. Melbourn White Lion & Swavesey Little Rose renewed 10 07 01 & a

1910 09 01

A stack fire occurred between Kneesworth and Meldreth. The alarm was given by rockets and soon a crowd gathered outside the fire station. The brigade turned out smartly but on arrival found the only water was from a small stream two inches deep and it was absolutely impossible to save them. The outbreak is supposed to have been caused by a boy who had been sent to burn some rubbish. Some other stacks caught fire at Barley but the brigade could not leave the Kneesworth blaze. It is supposed somebody had deliberately set them on fire. The police captured one man and are seeking another; he has a dark moustache and walks with a limp. 10 09 16f

1911 01 13

The court heard that the prisoner as employed as a platelayer at Meldreth Station. Mark Palmer was a coal dealer whose coal was stored near the station in the open – 11 01 13

1912 02 16

Joseph Marr, Meldreth farmer obituary – 12 02 16e

1912 12 20

The Meldreth Portland Cement Company's works have been purchased by the Standard Cement Company Ltd and will be reopened for the manufacture of Portland Cement. It is proposed to put down suction gas plant, new kilns and grinding machinery and generally overhaul the works. The old machinery has been adapted for the manufacture of ground lias lime which the company is now marketing. The reopening of these works after two years closure has naturally affected favourably the employment of workers and mechanics in the district. 12 12 20aa

1913 07 18

Flower shows, Chesterton, Sawston, Duxford, Swaffhams, Melbourn & Meldreth, West Wrating,

1913 09 19

Meldreth lad run over by truck

1914 06 26

Housing enquiry – Melbourn, Meldreth p7

1914 07 24

Melbourn & Meldreth show

1914 09 11

Territorials – response, Caxton, Foxton, Meldreth, Eltisley, Godmanchester, Swaffham Prior, Whittlesford,

1920 03 13

Walter Pepper, Meldreth smallholder, killed by runaway horse

1925 12 02

A dispute between the Vicar of Meldreth and his Parochial Church Council over the repair of the church and churchyard has come to a head with a petition for a faculty. In 1919 the churchyard was in a scandalous condition and had been made the dumping ground for the village. It contained old boots and tin cans and had been allowed to become infected with jackdaws and bats. Somebody shot the jackdaws from time to time and dead bodies lay about. It had never been mown and tombs were obliterated with brambles.

1925 11 09

The adjourned sitting of the Ely Consistory Court severely criticised the Vicar of Meldreth. The vicar said he felt plans by the Parochial Church Council regarding the church path was an attempt to interfere with consecrated ground and the graves of the dead. It was monstrous to disturb the dead who cannot take care of themselves and he stood for the dead in his churchyard. It was impossible for him to attend meetings of the church council owing to the attitude of one of the members. Everything connected with the council, the parish and everything else he was always finding fault with and complaining. It was impossible for the vicar, as chairman to attend any longer. So he gave up.

1931 02 07

Fire broke out at the Blue Lias Cement Works, Meldreth, during a snow and sleet storm. The engine rooms and mill house were damaged; most of the machinery was reduced to a mass of burnt wreckage and 20 men will have to 'stand off' for several months.

31 02 07a

1931 12 18

Gamlingay parish council has been told it may not get electricity for a considerable time. The Electricity Company has plans for a line from Eltisley to Meldreth in the future but there are many hundreds of towns and villages still waiting supply and the demand in Gamlingay is small. If factories were erected it would receive more favourable attention.

31 12 18d

1938 01 22

The most popular man in Meldreth is Mr. H. Ellis, who is fighting against an order that 21 of the village children, who have been attending Meldreth School, must in future go to Melbourn. The greater part of the village showed their support in no half-hearted fashion when they crowded —80 of them—into the Meldreth club room. The only man to speak in favour of the new order, reminded one very much of Daniel in the lions' den! The meeting carried a resolution demanding that "proper education be given to our children in our own village" 38 01 22a & b

1938 02 11

Meldreth School case, petition calls for inquiry – 38 02 11 & a

1938 02 25

The headmistress of Meldreth School said that following the reduction in her staff she could not on her own teach children whose ages ranged from eight to 13 properly. Their capabilities were so different that they would not progress. She would be sad if the older ones had to go to Melbourn but it was for their good. But parents say that a child could not be compelled to go to another school if he could learn reading, writing and arithmetic at the school he is attending. Anything beyond that is optional. They continued to refuse to send their children to Melbourn 38 02 25b & c

1938 03 02

Meldreth playwrights Muriel & Iredale Nelson's new thriller – 38 03 02a

1938 03 26

Meldreth school petition reaching crucial stage – 38 03 26a

1938 05 04

Meldreth school parents lose their fight to stop children being sent to Melbourn (see Memories) 38 05 04 & a, 38 05 06b

1938 09 05

Meldreth church was packed when Capt H.O.S. Ellis an 82-year-old barrister, was married to a lady 30 years his junior. The bride had planned a private wedding, but the parishioners altered all that. A continual dream came on foot, by cycle and even in bath-chairs until the whole of the path to the church was lined four or more deep. The ceremony over the couple faced a crowd armed with confetti, rice and cameras and some force had to be used to clear the way for the CDN photographer. They left by car for the Corner Café, Royston and their wedding feast. The groom has spent all his life in the village, is a councillor and was leader of the recent school strike. He first met his bride about six weeks ago. 38 09 05 & a

1939 01 06

Emilie Agnes Elin establishes almshouses for poor persons in Meldreth in her will – 39 01 06

1939 01 27

Shepreth and Meldreth ratepayers objected to the new water extension scheme. Everybody would pay an extra rate, whether they used the water or not. But there were 39 artesian springs in Meldreth that could all be made to run to a small pump. Water supplies in Orwell were inadequate and unsafe, being favourable to an outbreak of typhoid. The Government evacuation scheme made a pure supply a necessity for children coming from London: they would not be used to well water and serious illness might break out. 39 01 27a

1939 03 17

Meldreth builder bankruptcy 39 03 17b

1939 09 02

A Meldreth wheelwright and blacksmith claimed the increased use of motor traction and the slump in the agricultural industry were the cause of his failure. He'd open an ironmonger's shop in Melbourn in 1934 and bought a van to drive round villages selling hardware goods. But he did not make a profit so he sold the van to pay creditors. Two butchers, one at Stretham, the other Haddenham were also insolvent 39 09 20c

1941 07 10

Meldreth public water supply is unfit to drink – 41 07 10

1941 08 29

Harvest Horn. Among the "Wanted" advertisements in last week's paper (writes Watchman) was one asking for "domestic bygoness," and making special mention of old fire hooks, a farm smock, a harvest horn, articles required for the Old English Museum in Shepreth. A correspondent, himself a collector of antiquities, says it is good to know that such bygoness are being sought after and saved from destruction. Smocks and fire hooks are bulky articles not likely to be destroyed, but the harvest horn, a comparatively small instrument, may easily be overlooked, mislaid or cast aside as something of no importance, and perhaps not understood by the average villager today. Years ago in every agricultural village at harvest time, it was customary for a boy to walk slowly through a village, at or shortly before sunrise, and blow a horn as a signal for the labourer to go into the harvest fields. These horns were of simple design and of various sizes, and were sold mainly at Stourbridge Fair. Those in common use in Cambridgeshire were of stout block-tin, 16 inches in length, straight in shape, and tapering from a quarter of an inch (excluding trumpet-like mouthpiece) to an opening of about 2½ inches in diameter. The last of the horn-blowers in South Cambridgeshire was William King, of Melbourn, who died in December, 1935, aged 84 years. When a lad of about seven years of age (say about 1858) he was chosen to perambulate at sunrise and blow the horn, a harvest-time job he did for several years, his horn notes being heard at times both at Shepreth and Meldreth.

1942 09 29

Stationmaster. Railway passengers and others in the Royston area (says Watchman) will learn with interest of a staff change involving a popular railway official. He is Mr. George Green, who has been well-known in the town as Chief Clerk at the local station, and who has now been appointed Stationmaster at Meldreth and Melbourn. In the last war he lost a leg at Builecourt; but this handicap did not damp his enthusiasm upon the formation of the Home Guard in the town, and he became one of the original local members, And he is now Company Sergeant Major- testimony not only to his keenness, but to the recognition in higher quarters of his useful military experience.

1942 12 11

Meldreth, were present at Little St. Mary's Church, Cambridge, on Monday afternoon for the funeral of the Rev. Percy Harvey, who died at his home at Grantchester Meadows, Cambridge, on Friday. Mr. Harvey, who was in his 82nd year, was for 37 years vicar of Meldreth, and for the past three year or so had been doing duty at Christchurch, in the absence on war service of the vicar. While returning from a service one night, he lost his way in the black-out, and fell into a dyke. He sustained a shock from which he never recovered.

1943 06 11

Days To Be Remembered. — Although, taken as a whole (writes Watchman) Sunday School anniversary services are not what they used to be, it is interesting to know that in some parts of the country the event is just as eagerly anticipated and special hymns are practised for weeks before the event. The Methodist Sunday School anniversary at Meldreth attracts child lovers from many miles around and a special feature is the performing of a little playlet at the afternoon service. Each child is given a part to play, thus creating an interest in the Sunday School which is not soon forgotten. A north countryman staying in the village told a correspondent that people at his home look on the children's anniversaries as very special events, but in this case, children and teachers parade their district and sing hymns in the streets before the service. Each denomination has its own special district and neither encroaches on the other even though each anniversary is on a different Sunday. He told how all the children were "decked out" and of the rivalry for each district to "out-deck" the other. About four members of a local band - usually Church Army or Salvation Army - volunteered to lead the singing. Collections for Sunday School funds are taken at each stopping place and, my correspondent was informed, amounted to anything between £100 and £150

1943 08 06

Old Register, - The following note by the Vicar appears in this month's Parish Magazine (at Melbourn): The first names in the burial register of 1558 are Campion, Atkinson, Luddington and Poole. All these names are no longer found in the parish. Soon after occurs the names that are still with us — Stockbridge, Webb, Smith, Collis and Ingre. A correspondent adds: "Melbourn's 385-years-old register is one of the oldest in the district, the starting date of some of the others being Orwell 1560, Fowlmere 1581, Shepreth 1569 and Meldreth 1681. It may also be recalled that after various unsuccessful attempts, commencing in 1538, to secure a proper register of births, marriages and deaths in a village, it was not until July 1, 1837 that the present system of registration was established in England and Wales, Scotland followed in 1854 and Ireland in 1863."

1943 11 05

Plum and Apple from Meldreth. - From Meldreth, a small station on the L;N.E.R., in the heart of the county plum and apple orchards, over 2.000 tons of these fruits have been sent away by train during the recent fruit season, The tonnage is three times greater than the pre-war figure, and fruit merchants in the North of England have not been slow in congratulating the stationmaster at Meldreth on the fact that, in spite of the war-time congestion of the lines, these large quantities have been promptly dispatched, and what is more important for this traffic, have been promptly received

1951 03 29

After a lull of about a month another outbreak of fowl pest has occurred at Meldreth, where some 200 birds have had to be destroyed. The outbreak, the first reported since that at Rampton, brings the total number to 38. Some 22,000 birds have been destroyed. Last week the total of birds slaughtered in the Isle of Ely was more than doubled by an outbreak in a big flock at Manea.

1951 08 01

If objections by local villagers, farmers and the Ministry of Agriculture to the establishment of a £11 million cement works at Meldreth are over-ruled the village is destined to become one of the most important cement-producing centres in the country. The proposed Portland Cement work will occupy a site of some 400 acres. "This site is ideal; there is adequate labour, water, materials and electricity available", they say. "Everyone is aware of the rough nature of Meldreth, an area noted for its flatness and it will cause very little local interference". Asked about the noise, smell and dust possibility they said it would be insufficient to damage fruit trees in the area.

1952 07 03

Part of the river Mel has flooded Orchard Cottage at Station Road, Meldreth and South Cambs RDC ought to do something about it because the river belongs to them, said Mr Pepper. The lower half-mile of the river where it discharged into the Rhee had been taken over by the Council. The state of the river had gone from bad to worse. Some time ago it broke its banks and they plugged the breach, but this only dammed the water until it reached a higher level where it broke through the banks again. But the chairman said: "It must not go out that this Council is the drainage authority and will clean out peoples' ditches"

1952 11 20

South Cambs RDC decided they were not responsible for cleaning out the river Mel near Sheene Farm and refused a request from Meldreth parish council to take action which would prevent the flooding of the road. Coun Pepper said: "It is common knowledge that houses are flooded and drainage floats about the gardens, roads are flooded and travel becomes dangerous. The responsibility lies fairly and squarely upon this council". But Coun Murfitt said the Council was not responsible for flooding.

1957 12 19

Meldreth turkey farm – 57 12 19

***The Cambridgeshire Collection has newspaper cuttings from this date***

1960 06 29

Meldreth residents win Greyhound Derby – 60 06 29

1961 05 25

In 1911 Cyril Ridgeon set up in timber and the products of the Cam Cement Company at Meldreth. These prospered and he was able to rent a small area in the Tenison Road Wharf of the Great Eastern Railway Company. The initial buildings were modest and deliveries could only be made by horse drawn transport – very different from the fleet of lorries and vans now in operation. Over 50 years it has grown into a concern employing 200 people supplying every kind of building material required. 61 05 25

1961 11 24

Topcliffe Mill Meldreth converted into house – 61 11 24

1961 02 24

Meldreth – detailed feature article – 61 02 24, a & b CIP



1964 01 03

Preliminary stages in the creation of a boarding school and medical unit at Meldreth for 120 spastic children have been completed. The Old Manor House has been converted to form accommodation for the school staff. It is a pioneer project where children will be educated normally and trained for a full and useful future. The National Spastics Society hope it will be copied all over the world 64 01 03c

1965 10 21

Vinpac of Meldreth packages wine in plastic bags – 65 10 21a

1980 07 28

Meldreth's ancient stocks, which stood on the village green, have been struck by a car, destroying the medieval punishment frame. Now it lies in pieces against a large tree and people are wondering whether it will be possible to repair. Villagers believe the stocks are at least 400 years old & were last used in 1856 when a villager became unruly and started shouting in church.

80 07 28

1981 11 17

Meldreth village hall is the unlikely venue for a clutch of international jazz stars playing one of only two concerts in this country. The 'Songs of the South' show is headed by two New Orleans jazzmen, James 'Sing' Miller and Frank Fields, both members of the famous Preservation Hall Band with Britain's leading clarinettist, Sammy Rimmington. Meanwhile Humphrey Lyttleton turned up at Meldreth Manor School for handicapped children with his own brand of swing 81 11 17

1987 12 22

More than 500 Christmas turkeys, chicken and geese went under the hammer at Cambridge's turkey auction. Prices for turkeys from 62-83p per lb while chickens fetched 62-72p lb. The biggest seller was a king-sized 35lb stag turkey. Meanwhile Mrs Thatcher's turkey, specially selected from Valley Farm, Meldreth, was personally delivered to Downing Street in a limousine by farm owner Tony Burlton who started rearing turkeys at the farm 21 years ago. It was prepared for the oven by the farm's butcher, Brian Collins and taken to a London florist to receive the final presentation treatment 87 12 22

1988 07 21

Mothers protest at removal of ground-level crossing at Meldreth station – now must use footbridge – 88 07 21b

1989 10 19

The Atlas Stone Company was established in 1902 alongside the Portland cement works in Coldham's Lane (the present Sainsbury's site). It moved to Meldreth where during the Second World War they worked round the clock producing asbestos-reinforced concrete sheeting to repair bomb-damaged cities. Then in 1984 with concern over the use of asbestos they switched to other fibres. Today the works are the UK headquarters of Eternit TAC which has a workforce of over 400 89 10 19

1990 01 03

A bridge between Meldreth and Orwell which spans the River Cam at Malton Lane collapsed on Christmas Day morning after part of a buttress was washed away during storms. County engineers say it will cost about £50,000 to replace and they may construct a temporary bridge

during reconstruction. The choice is whether to repair the bridge or rebuild it. The road may be closed for two months – 90 01 03